

Article 16A.

Discontinuation of Telecommunications Services.

§ 15A-299. Discontinuation of telecommunications services used for unlawful purposes.

(a) The legislature finds that some persons use telecommunications services to violate State or federal criminal law. The legislature further finds that some persons use telecommunications services or technology, such as call forwarding and cellular radio transmission, to avoid detection or arrest.

(b) A customer of a telecommunications company operating within the State may use telecommunications services only for lawful purposes.

(c) If a local, State, or federal law enforcement officer acting within the scope of the officer's duties obtains evidence that telecommunications services are being used or have been used by a customer or by the employee or agent of the customer to violate State or federal criminal law, the officer may request either the district attorney or the Attorney General as appropriate to apply to the district court of the county in which the suspected violation of State or federal criminal law occurred for an order requiring the telecommunications company to discontinue service to the customer. The court shall hold a hearing on the application as soon as possible, but no sooner than 48 hours after notice of the application for discontinuation of service is delivered to the address at which the telecommunications services are furnished or to the address to which bills for telecommunications services are mailed, according to the telecommunications company records. Notice must also be given to the registered agent for the service of process upon the telecommunications company at least 48 hours prior to the hearing. Notices required under this section shall be given pursuant to the provisions of Rule 4 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure. If the court finds clear and convincing evidence that the telecommunications services are being used or have been used to violate State or federal criminal law, the court may order the telecommunications company to discontinue such service immediately.

(d) Telecommunications services discontinued under this section may be reinstated only by court order, and call forwarding or message referrals, whether recorded or live, may not be provided until reinstatement of service is ordered by the court. The court may order reinstatement of telecommunications services if it finds that the customer is not likely to use the services to violate State or federal criminal law. The standard of proof shall be the same as that used for the disconnect order.

(e) A telecommunications company shall be held harmless from liability to any person when complying with any court order issued under this section. (1997-372, s. 1.)